



Leaf Notes

The Newsletter of Lee County Master Gardeners



Spring 2014

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2014 Garden Tour



Tour participants were able to see a variety of gardens on the 2014 tour as did these visitors to Sunset Farms.

by Jolly Roberts, MG Class of 2003, & Sarah Fair, MG Class of 2010

We would like to thank all of you who worked to make the 2014 Garden Tour our most successful to date. All committee leaders and members, garden owners, sponsors, MGs, Friends and all others who helped plan, run, support and work the tour gardens are invited to join the LCMGA in celebrating the tour's success during our scheduled June Social, June 6th from 6 - 9 pm at the home of Mary Ann Stiles. There we will announce the final tally of the tour's revenue, less expenses, from ticket sales, sponsorships and gifts.

Quite a few positive comments were overheard during the tour from visitors and workers alike. Visitors remarked about the welcoming friendliness and helpfulness of the garden workers and the garden owners. Both visitors and our garden workers expressed happiness with the variety of pleasurable experiences and great ideas offered by all the tour stops and gardens. This has been a large team effort, and the teamwork showed in the fairly smooth

operation of the tour in general. We all performed our jobs well and should all be proud of our part in providing this special educational event to our community. This is also a perfect time for us to make note of and share any ideas we may have for improving the tour while the experience is fresh in our minds.

Please enjoy a few photos to remember the tour by (see page 5), and a message received from one of our tour visitors — a winner of one of the ticket drawings at the Home and Garden Show — who this year attended the tour for the first time:

We thoroughly enjoyed our tour of the Opelika and Auburn gardens. We got to the Ag Park toward "winding down" time, but still enjoyed the exhibits still around. Can't wait to see my tumeric grow! And we may just try planting a tomato in a bale. I am not sure we would ever have attended a garden tour, but winning the tickets at the home show just may have started something! Thanks again for all your attention. Kind regards, Dorenda White

Tour Coordinators: Sarah Fair, Jolly Roberts & Susan Price

Sponsorship: Jim Disque, Jeanne Estrada & Gene Galloway

Head Garden Coordinator: Beth Dorman
Publicity: Sarah Fair, Lynne Bell & Raleigh Sillman

Graphics: Jolly Roberts

Directional Signs: Toby Hoover & John Waller - Opelika; Susan Price & Nancy Golson - Auburn

Garden Coordinators:

Red Barn - Julia Freeman & Jan Holt

JCSM - Susan Price & Nancy Golson

Serene Black Bamboo Cottage - Carol Griffin & Jim Disque

Corks in the Courtyard - Charlot Ritenbaugh & Kelly Haynes

Sunset Farm - Anne Morgan, Jane Jones & Gene Galloway

Heaven Sent - Jane Sepansky & Steve Crannell

Southern Reprieve - Beth Dorman & Carola Pike



The information table at Southern Reprieve welcomes visitors and thanks our generous sponsors.

Photos by Jolly Roberts

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Up & Coming Events

- June 6, Fire Ant Management Webinar, 1pm.
For info and link: <https://learn.extension.org/events/1372#.U4IFkZRdV8w>.
- June 6, June MG Social & Shrimp Boil, Home of Mary Ann Stiles, 1655 Creekwood Trail, Auburn. Friends, spouses and guests welcome.
For info: Julia Freeman, 334-740-4423.
- June 14, 2-4pm, Birmingham Botanical Gardens, Birmingham Butterfly Education & Awareness Day. Free. For info: 205-414-3950 or <http://www.bbgardens.org/other-events.php#aga>.
- June 18, 1-6pm, Birmingham Botanical Gardens, Birmingham Fern Society Annual Show & Sale. For info: 205-414-3950 or <http://www.bbgardens.org/other-events.php#aga>.
- June 19, Young's Plant Farm, Auburn, Trial Garden Tour. For info: MC McCarthy at maryclaire.mccarthy1234@gmail.com or 334-303-1925. <http://youngspanlntfarm.com/trialgarden-main/>.
- June 28, 7am-2pm, Petals From the Past, Jemison, Annual Greenhouse Sale. For info: 205-646-0069.
- July 9, Extension office, 11:30 am, Monthly Meeting, Brown Bag Lunch. Speaker: Jan Newton on Native Plants.
- Oct 21-24, Baton Rouge, LA, Southern Region MG Conference. Info: <http://www.southernregionmgconf2014.com/>.

Notes from the President

by MG President Dennis Pinkard, MG Class of 2007

As I write this column a few days away from our 2014 Garden Tour, I am amazed at what a small core of leaders, Sarah, Jolly, Jim, Susan and Beth have accomplished. They have motivated many of the rest of us with their example of dedication and commitment. Their enthusiasm has caused many of us to rally to work at Tour gardens and to help in any way we can. This will be a wonderful community event that will draw us closer to our citizens and promotes our mission to assist Extension in transferring horticultural information to the public. Thanks to all who are helping make this a Tour to remember.

Congratulations to Carol and Billie for the successful grant request to AMGA in support of the Caroline Dean Wildflower Trail. Carol received a \$1,000 check at the AMGA Conference near the end of last month. The money will be invested primarily in native plants and plant labels for the Trail. If you have not visited the Trail in a while, it is worth another look, as many of the natives planted there over the past three years have begun to mature and improve the beauty of the area.

Our three garden projects are a source of pride for us and all of them are looking very impressive this spring. We have invested considerable sweat-equity and money in these gardens. We are all so proud of the jobs Charlot, Beth and Billie continue to perform. They have huge challenges, and we need to help them as much as we can. All of the gardens are excellent teaching labs for the community, whether we are there or not. Because this is the active gardening season (and the weather is getting hot), this time of year is especially busy in the gardens. We do not always have the manpower necessary to complete all the tasks our project leaders want to achieve, yet we do not want to let mother nature win. It may be that we decide to hire some additional help for the gardens. We will want to be considering this option and the additional cost involved.

Please plan to attend our June social at the home of Friend Mary Ann Stiles. She has graciously invited us to spend a few hours with her June 6. Look for additional details to follow in an email. If you have thoughts about the party or want to volunteer to help, please contact our vice-president, Julia, 740-4423. We look forward to celebrating our Garden Tour and other successes with you then.

I hope to see you soon,
Dennis

Ambrosia Beetles Attacking Small Trees

by Mallory Kelley
Regional Extension Agent

The granulate ambrosia beetles have been causing quite a stir in home landscapes over the past few weeks. This beetle was introduced into the United States in the early 1970s in South Carolina and has since spread throughout the southeast and as far north as Maryland. The tiny beetle is a pest of woody ornamental, fruit and nut trees and can cause significant damage in nursery, landscape and orchard settings.

Granulate ambrosia beetles emerge in early spring and attack thin-barked, deciduous trees. Tree species most commonly reported to be damaged are dogwood, redbud, maple, ornamental cherry, Japanese maple and crepe myrtle. Other reported hosts include pecan, peach, plum, persimmon, golden rain tree, sweet gum, Shumard oak, Chinese elm, magnolia, fig, hydrangea and azalea.

Young trees and small branches of mature trees are where these beetles attack. Female beetles bore into the trunks and branches (1-3 inches in diameter) and excavate galleries in the wood. In addition to boring damage, female beetles inoculate trees with ambrosia fungus, which can block xylem vessels and interfere with vascular transport. Infested plants often die from boring damage, ambrosia fungus or infection by a secondary pathogen.

These beetles attack seemingly healthy trees, as well as stressed or unhealthy ones. Visible symptoms include wilted foliage and strands of boring dust protruding from small holes. Serious attacks that result in tree death usually occur during leafing-out stage.

Infestations can be easily identified by toothpick-like strands protruding up to 1.5 inches from the bark of the host plant. The strands of boring dust are produced by the female beetle as she excavates her gallery. They are fragile



and easily broken off by wind or rain leaving only pencil lead-sized holes.

Preventative applications of pyrethroid insecticides can protect trees by preventing granulate ambrosia beetles from excavating galleries. However, once beetles are inside trees they cannot be killed with insecticides, and fungicides are ineffective against the ambrosia fungus. Thus, the timing of preventative insecticide applications is crucial to protect trees from damage by this pest. Dr. Charles Ray, Auburn University Extension entomologist says, "Recent research of the first flight of granulate ambrosia beetle in spring has found it occurs at almost exactly the same time as Bradford pears beginning to bloom. This gives a clear sign to a homeowner of when they should apply the preventative sprays."

If you notice the white strands protruding from the branches or main trunk of your trees or shrubs, the plant parts should be removed and destroyed.



Photo by Beth Dorman

Steve Crannell is talking to a Girl Scout troop that visited Grandma's Garden this spring. They toured all of the gardens at Pioneer Park while working on their Gardening Badge. Rick Himmer gave a presentation about raised-bed gardening in the Kitchen Garden. Beth Dorman and Steve Crannell also led a tour through the Herb Garden.

Sources: Dr. Charles Ray, Auburn University, Extension Entomologist.
North Carolina State University <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/ent/notes/O&T/trees/note111/note111.html>

Caroline Dean Wildflower Trail Spring Cleaning

by Billie Oliver, MG Class of 2012

Seven graduate students from Dr. Charlene LeBleu's AU landscape design program joined with MGs Dennis Pinkard and Billie Oliver on the Caroline Dean Wildflower Trail for a perfect April afternoon of spring cleaning. Some applied a protective coat of clear oil stain to our handcrafted garden shed, while others cleared debris from an area adjoining the shed and hauled it from the park, helping prepare for Garden in the Park. All expressed enjoyment of the natural setting of our garden, listening to the water rushing over the rocks and spotting spring wild flowers in little nooks under the dappled light of the forest canopy.

Dr. LeBleu is an Associate Professor of Landscape Architecture (AU) whose research focuses on green infrastructure systems and low-impact development, an expert in landscape design as related to water. Lee County Master Gardeners working on the CDWT were excited to have her visit our native woodland garden and to have the opportunity to work with this energetic group eager to be of service to the community by improving our public gardens.



Students applying protective finish to garden shed.



A group of MGs and Friends went to Eufaula for the Pilgrimage and viewed two homes and gardens. One other field trip has been planned this season – to Young's Plant Farm, June 19th to view the Trial Gardens. Suggestions for other trips include Callaway Gardens, Atlanta Botanical Gardens, Aldridge Gardens and gardens of some of our MGs. Please contact MC McCarthy if you have ideas for any other field trips at maryclaire.mccarthy1234@gmail.com or 334-303-1925.

Don't Forget the June Social & Shrimp Boil

June 6, 6-9 pm

at the home of Mary Ann Stiles

1655 Creekwood Trail, Auburn



Photos by Sam Oliver

Dr. LeBleu's graduate students with Billie Oliver and Dennis Pinkard at the entrance to the trail work site.

Sincere Thanks to our Sponsors & Contributors

Please show them your appreciation for helping make this tour possible.

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Maestro 2300 * The Flower Store
Simply Shutters * Linda & Austin Wade
Wilson's Woodyard * Young's Plant Farm

Contributors

Judy & Tommy Chase * Kelly & Brooks Cullen
Christine & David Disque * Sally Hill
Keystone Bank * Lowe's
Anna & Bill Neville * Melanie & John Shain
Southern Lawns * Nanci & Christopher Uher



Photos by Jolly Roberts



Scenes from the 2014 Lee County Master Gardeners Garden Tour: (clockwise from top) Auburn University's Red Heritage Barn, Corks in the Courtyard, Heaven Sent, Serene Black Bamboo Cottage, JCSM and Southern Reprive.

The BIG Event – Big Help

AU Students Help Fight Invasives in Opelika

by Katie Lamar Jackson, LCMGA Friend

On March 22, a band of more than 50 Auburn University students arrived in Opelika to join forces with Lee County Master Gardeners and other volunteers in an effort to help restore ecosystem balance in Opelika's Municipal Park and the Caroline Dean Wildflower Trail.

Armed with clippers, gloves and lots of enthusiasm, the students were part of Auburn's BIG Event, which is sponsored by Auburn's Student Government Association. The BIG Event is a student-run volunteer day that began 12 years ago to encourage college students and faculty to thank the community for providing a thriving environment to live and learn by volunteering their time and energy to meet local needs. This year more than 2,200 student volunteers came

out to work at some 200 schools, homes, churches, parks and other sites throughout Lee County.

The students who helped at Opelika Municipal Park and the Wildflower Trail helped make a huge dent in what had already been an amazingly effective effort that began in the fall of 2013 when, on Sept. 21, a smaller but equally dedicated band of volunteers participated in the first-ever Opelika Plant Wars day. That event, which was co-sponsored by the City of Opelika's Parks and Recreation Department, Alabama Invasive Plant Council (ALIPC), Opelika Kiwanis Club, Keep Opelika Beautiful and the Lee County Master Gardeners, focused on identifying and controlling invasive plants.

Invasive plants, defined by the U.S. Forest Service as non-native plant

species that are capable of causing environmental, economic or human harm, often displace native species, reduce native wildlife habitat, disrupt important ecosystem processes and degrade recreation areas. Chinese privet and thorny olive (*elaegnus*) were the primary targets for the Opelika volunteers, though a great deal of litter, fallen trees and limbs and other debris also was removed.

According to Billie Oliver, a Lee County Master Gardener who helped organize the Plant Wars event and regularly coordinates MG workdays at the Wildflower Trail, this program is ideally suited for the trail area, which is dedicated to native plants. Caroline Dean is an Opelika resident and honorary Lee County Master Gardener who is a nationally known expert on native plants.

"Removal of aggressive, non-native plant species has been an ongoing process," Oliver said. "The concentration of Chinese privet and *elaegnus* along Rocky Brook Creek and the edges of the Wildflower Trail compete for light, water and soil nutrients and crowd out the less aggressive native trees and shrubs," she explained. Removing these invaders not only helps the native plants thrive, it also improves the aesthetic value of the trail and the park, making it more accessible to visitors.

Another positive impact of the BIG Event was that a number of students who participated that day have asked to come back and help on a regular basis.



Dee Smith on left helped direct the Big Events students in identifying and removing invasives at CDWT.

Photo by Sam Oliver

Kiesel Park Demo Gardens Abloom

by Billie Oliver, MG Class of 2012

April 9th was the perfect early spring day for visiting both the gardens at Kiesel Park and at Grandma's Garden. The day provided an introduction to these two LCMGA projects for nine interns, five MGs and a Friend of LCMGA. The following expands on some of the questions I was asked that day. Tomie Dugas and Carol Womer provided more background and current information of the demonstration gardens at Kiesel Park in addition to the following:

Passing under the muscadine vine-covered arbor and entering the gardens, the native coral honeysuckle, *Lonicera sempervirens*, covering the trellis (pictured at right) was hard to miss. Another common name used for this Alabama native is trumpet honeysuckle. It is preferred over the invasive Japanese honeysuckle with white and yellow flowers.

The evergreen perennial, Stokes aster, *Stokesia*, commands the base of the trellis. Not a true aster, it blooms in spring and early summer and is easy to propagate.



The lone Peony *festiva maxima* (shown at left) had just begun its spring growth. This variety of peony is one recommended for withstanding our southern heat and humidity.

Blooming near the crinum was *Camassia scilloides*, a native southeastern bulb. There are other varieties found on the prairies and in western states. It was an important food source for Native Americans and early European settlers.

The Meditation garden attracts butterflies to the Rose Creek *Albela*. I misnamed this shrub as Shoal's Creek that day. When it blooms later this summer, it will be covered with butterflies. Yellow flowers covered Carolina jasmine with wild abandon, creating an eye-catching backdrop. It attracts bees and humans with its strong color.



In the Butterfly area, the common rue *Ruta graveolins* had remained green throughout the winter. There was *Amsonia* blooming and vigorous shoots of *Baptisia* appearing. These along with the parsley provide larvae foods for specific butterflies.

The Cutting Garden had seed sprouts of *Clarkia* and *Nemophila* (Five-Spot or Baby Blue Eyes) starting to grow along with new seedlings of sunflowers. Carol shared numerous facts about the flowering plants grown here.

Tomie identified plants in the Native area including American beauty-berry – *Callicarpa americana*, winged or shining Sumac – *Rhus copallina*, muhly grass – *Muhlenbergia capillaris* and Sweetshrub – *Calycanthus floridus*. One lucky visitor went home with a volunteer piece of this fragrant shrub. Tomie also shared her knowledge of herbs growing nearby.

Thanks for visiting LCMGA's 14-year-old project, the demonstration Garden at Kiesel Park. Visitors are always welcome.



Carol Womer welcomed interns to the Cutting Garden at the Kiesel Park Demo Garden.

The Seed Revolution

by Gita Smith, MG Class of 2002

For some gardeners, germinating seeds is a trial of their patience, and the weeks spent at the planting table are like waiting to exhale.

Not this gardener.

I am constantly fascinated by the power held in something as small as a seed. I love their varied shapes and colors. In Alabama, where you can grow plants through all the seasons, I find it especially interesting that some seeds actually need extreme cold before they germinate, while others won't express their DNA until the ground has warmed above 55 degrees. As we decide which plants we want to grow in summer or fall, we need to remember that seeds have their needs, too.

Last year, I picked up a packet of blue poppy seeds on my travels. The instructions on the envelope were a bit daunting. They said, "For the Experienced Gardener." I had to take stock of myself for a moment. I am far from a novice, and yet, I still make goofy mistakes. Was I qualified to plant those seeds?

I was instructed to "take into account the long germination period" that the seeds would need. In other words, poppy seeds slumber for months, through a cold spell, in their little peat pots filled with potting soil. I vowed to be patient and, in October, placed one infinitesimal seed apiece into 4-inch pots. Each seed was no bigger than the dot of an i on this page. They rested in my unheated greenhouse until February, when into the ground they went.

Also last October, as part of my planning for the 2014 spring and summer,

I plucked the spent flower heads of cone flowers (echinacea) with their long, thin, sharp seeds. I put half into storage. Then I walked around the yard where I scattered the remaining half randomly to see if those would germinate and grow.

I dead-headed giant red zinnias and did the same. The zinnia seeds were large and flat – each one a hundred times the size of a blue poppy seed.

This process of gathering and scattering seeds is guaranteed to produce flowers next spring and summer, one way or another. Yet not every seed will germinate and grow. So what does a seed want? Why don't they all produce a new plant in the image of the parent?

I think light has a lot to do with the success or failure of a seed to grow well. The worst mistake I made in recent years was not knowing that the cleome seeds I was eager to germinate are among the seeds that need light to get started. I was burying them in potting soil, and when nothing happened, I was ready to blame the seed supplier for a bum batch.

Weeks went by before a kindly stranger on the internet clued me in. "Just sprinkle them on the top of the dirt, and water them gently," the advice stated. "Make sure some light reaches the seeds."

Examples of other plants that need light to germinate are impatiens, begonias and alyssum. So while you are placing seeds in flats or peat pots or garden rows, check to be sure which ones like the dark and which the light.

Temperature plays a role in seed happiness, as well. Most of our summer-blooming seeds germinate in tem-

peratures between 60 and 70 degrees Fahrenheit. Germination time may vary from three to 14 days, and it's our job to keep the soil pretty uniformly moist – not wet – and warm during that time. Read the directions on a seed packet for the correct planting depth, too. If planted too deep or shallow, the seed will not produce a good strong sprout.

Seeds sown indoors in early spring or in a greenhouse need time to "harden off" before they go in the ground outdoors. This means giving them gradually cooler conditions before you set them out permanently. If they don't "harden," they might go into shock. It takes about seven days of exposing them to outside air – which is drier and colder than that in a greenhouse – for bedding plants to be ready for life in the wild.

The seeds I like best are the large, hard, pearly black ones that I find in the dried pods left behind by daylilies. They remind me of the birdshot pellets inside a shotgun shell.

What if I filled a 3-inch shotgun shell with daylily seeds and fired my 12-gauge up, up and out over my property: Would the seeds spray and fan out and fall 45 yards away and grow to be daylilies in two years?

I would say to a visitor, "Oh, yes, those are the rare Remington lilies, which only grow in Alabama, in the exact pattern that a shotgun makes." It would become a new trend in gardening. Soon, there would be no shotguns left on store shelves. Slumbering poppies would awaken briefly at the sound of the blast, then nod off again. It would be a world where all birds were safe because only gardeners would have guns.

Dennis Goes Native

by Tomie Dugas, MG Class of 2004

LaFayette natives, Dennis and Jean Ellis Pinkard moved to Auburn after Dennis retired from Navy civilian service in San Diego June 2007. The couple moved into a newly built house in Grove Hill with a front yard landscape of grass, builder-planted ligustrum and nandina. “The backyard,” comments Dennis, “was a typical Alabama jungle,” replete with smilax, muscadine vines, pines and crowded trees.

Around this time Dennis began his MG course, choosing to volunteer at the Davis Arboretum where the focus was on native trees and shrubs. A new collection was being formed of native azaleas, many rescued from vulnerable sites. Dennis helped dig up, label and replant many for the arboretum – and found his passion.

All the while the Vietnam vet had been working to transform his backyard jungle, clearing trees and vines and planting river birch by the back porch.

A runner, Dennis spied rocks on his runs through the developing neighborhood to pick up later – which contributed to the 800 or so stones that now define the garden beds housing his growing collection of native azaleas. The rocks and bed placements also help channel and slow water flow through the sloped backyard.

On the west “sunny” side of the house by the driveway are beds of native azaleas planted together by species: alabamensis, austrinum, oconees, piedmonts rescued from the airport construction site and atlanticum under a



Photo by Jilly Roberts

Dennis has worked extensively over time to bring more color and interest to his front-yard landscape.

canopy of hardwoods. It has taken five years to collect the 110 natives now in his collection, most coming from Ernest Koons of Lazy K Nursery. Dennis also has planted some Asian azaleas given by family and friends.

A back border of Leyland cypress will eventually be replaced by wax myrtle he dug up along the roadway. Nearby are fothergilla and Florida azaleas along with Florida anise and itea. Understory trees include red buckeye and dogwoods (Kousa, pink and white flowering).

A number of native plants shared by fellow MGs have found homes in the back beds including: Christmas and maidenhair ferns, ajuga, red columbine, bleeding heart, Lenten rose, horsetail, stokesia, ginger lily, green and gold, spider lily and trillium. Our president, now in his 3rd term, prefers to plant perennials, noting “Annuals are too much work.”

Deer ate all but a handful of the three dozen hosta bulbs and oakleaf hydrangea seedlings he planted, so

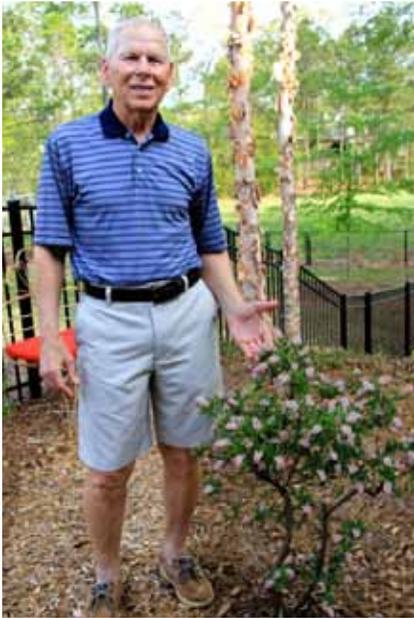
Dennis now focuses on deer-resistant plants and rotates using deer spray and other deterrents.

Sprinkled among the beds are spaces to sit and enjoy the woodland setting. Decorative items including Japanese fishing balls acquired during the his years in the Navy add color to the landscape.

In the front yard, Dennis has added a Japanese maple, tea olive and ginger lily to the landscape and a top bed with weeping yaupon, Stella d’Ora daylilies, spirea, muhly grass and blue-eyed grass. Nearby on a brick pillar by the driveway, Dennis serves a breakfast of raisins every morning to a mockingbird who lets him know if he is late.

Future plans include installing a flagstone-paved grilling area next to his newly enlarged back porch. “There is not much room to do any more landscaping except by eliminating grass in the front,” he claims, but don’t bet that this will slow Dennis down. He will find more plants to collect and rework the beds. That’s what gardeners do, isn’t it?

Dennis' Garden Album



Photos by Jolly Roberts



Top left: Dennis beside his new *Cliftonia monophylla*.
Top right: Native azalea beds are at the top of the photo and left of the path coming from the driveway to steps flanked by Asian azaleas leading to the back screened porch.
Mid left: One of several inviting spots to sit a spell.
Middle right: The "loopy" tree with its special fencing allows the grandchildren to climb on it.
Bottom: Trillium and ajuga.



Photos by Jolly Roberts & Dennis Pinkard



Top left to right: Rhododendron astrinum (Florida), Rhododendron calendulaceum hybrid (flame), Rhododendron canadense, 'Varnadoe' (piedmont), Rhododendron oconee hybrid
Middle left: Rhododendron atlanticum, 'Marydel'
Middle top right: Cliftonia monophylla (buckwheat tree)
Middle bottom right: Aesculus pavia (red buckeye)
Bottom left to right: Rhododendron astrinum (piedmont), Rhododendron 'chapmannii' (Chapman's rhododendron)

Growing Alabama's Sand-Loving Oaks in the Arboretum

by Patrick Thompson

Arboretum Specialist, Davis Arboretum at Auburn University

The Arboretum's main collection has always been its oak trees. In 2005, the North American Plant Collections Consortium suggested we complete our collection of Alabama oaks by adding rare species and shrub oaks. You have probably seen some of these species as you approach the beaches. They are often part of an evergreen thicket, but other times they are sparse. The primary dunes topped with sea oats are often the only thing between them and the Gulf of Mexico. Some species in this habitat we wanted to display include myrtle oak, *Quercus myrtifolia*; chapman oak, *Q. chapmanii*; and sand live oak, *Q. geminata*. Another oak community occurs just a little inland, where there is more moisture and organic matter in the soil. There you'll find live oak, *Q. virginiana*; laurel oak, *Q. hemisphaerica*; and water oak, *Q. nigra*, growing with southern magnolias and redbays.

As you move northward from the coast, it becomes a mosaic of habitats where these wetter hammocks are interspersed with drier patches where you may have seen the glaucous, bluish green leaves of the bluejack

oak, *Q. incana*, between titi's and palmettos. Soon the longleaf pine becomes the dominant tree. Perhaps between them you've noticed the twisting habit of the turkey oak, *Q. laevis*, or the spreading colonies of runner oak, *Q. elliotii*, or the arthritic branching of the sand post oak, *Q. margarettae*.

There are other native oaks that are both very rare and partial to sand including the Arkansas oak, *Q. arkansana*; Oglethorpe oak, *Q. oglethorpensis*; and the shrubby live oak, *Q. minima*, which most Alabamians will never encounter.

That is exactly why we brought in 100 tons of sand and spent a month churning and shaping our lawn into sandhills. In addition to the 10 species of oaks, you will find oddities like deciduous hollies, *Ilex longipes*, and *Ilex ambigua*, and familiar garden plants like blanket flower, *Gaillardia pulchella*; and Beardtongue, *Penstemon australis*. We hope you will visit our new sandhill display, and take advantage of this opportunity to meet Alabama's fantastic diversity of native oaks.



Preparing the beds for the new sandhill environment.



The completed sandhill display just waiting for time to mature the native trees and shrubs.

Photos by Patrick Thompson



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